

Let's Explore

Salem-Cumberland Counties



Salem Creek with bridge leading into the town of Salem from the west. Salem Glass Works is at right.



Salem's 400-year-old white oak is an important tourist attraction. Tree's foliage shades a quarter-acre.



YOU'VE gone as far as you can go on the New Jersey Turnpike when the signs say "Deepwater." Ahead looms the magnificent Delaware Memorial Bridge—a powerful invitation—but for first-hand acquaintanceships with a fascinating part of New Jersey turn your back on the bridge and meander southward along the banks of the Delaware River. This is a long trip; it requires a full day to accomplish. Better yet, it's the kind of exploration to tuck away for that week-end when you're looking for a "different" overnight junkel.

To get under way, swing off the 'pike at Interchange 1, make a left turn at the T-intersection and then within a block turn right for Route 44 at Deepwater. Follow through Pennsville and just beyond look for signs to Fort Mott State Park, one of New Jersey's most unusual spots.

EARLY in the Civil War Fort Mott was hastily built to protect the port of Philadelphia

Historic Country South of the Jersey Turnpike Offers More-Than Can Be Seen in a Day, So Plan Trip as an 'Overnighter'

BY JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

from possible water-borne attack. Sturdily built gun emplacements and ammunition magazines remain in almost perfect condition and fully open to the public. The fort fronts on the Delaware River at a point where it widens into what is known as "Salem Cove," and the location and atmosphere are an invitation to spend hours in the park.

Midway across the river on Pea Patch Island can be seen Fort Delaware, where more than 2,000 wretched Confederate prisoners of war died from malnutrition and raging epidemics. Pea Patch Island owes its size to a sailing vessel which went aground late

in the 18th Century and spilled its entire cargo of peas on a small spit of land scarcely larger than the size of a house. The peas sprouted, vines enmeshed river drift and the island grew. By 1814, when the original Fort Delaware was started, the island comprised 86 acres.

Just after the Battle of Gettysburg the fort began to fill with prisoners. Soon hundreds grew ill and died. Even Northern inspectors described the prison as horrible—and one said the prisoners "had more life on them than in them."

Most of the dead were taken ashore to Fort Mott, then bur-



Two of oldest homes in Salem are the Alexander Grant House (left), home of the county historical society, and the Bradway House (above), built in 1691.



Among points of interest on the South Jersey route (below) are America's oldest log cabin (above, left)

and historic William Hancock House, with its unusual herringbone brick pattern, both at Hancock's Bridge.

Staff photos by Porter.



ied in nearby Finn's Point, where today a towering obelisk in the National Cemetery marks the graves of 2,436 Confederate dead.

INTERESTING though Fort Mott and Finn's Point are, however, it is the town of Salem which best typifies this quiet South Jersey country. Great tidal flats lie to the west of the city, ending on the banks of Salem Creek. Close to the creek are Salem's canning and glass factories, con-

trasting sharply with the venerability of the town's shaded streets, where more than 50 houses predate the Revolutionary War.

No. 1 tourist attraction in Salem is the ancient white oak dominating Friends Burial Ground in West Broadway. Estimated to be at least 400 years old, the mighty tree stands more than 88 feet tall and its foliage shades more than a quarter of an acre.

John Fenwick, who in 1675 settled Salem as the first per-

manent English-speaking settlement on the Delaware, sat beneath the oak as he bartered with Indians for sale of the land. Settlers came quickly to the land Fenwick called a "new Canaan" and Salem was a port of call for sailing vessels before Philadelphia.

Two old houses serve to illustrate the antiquity of Salem—the Bradway House at 32 West Broadway and the Alexander Grant House at 83 Market street. The Bradway House, built in 1691, was occu-

pied by Royal Governors and several times the Provincial Congress of West Jersey met there. Set close to the street, with a roof extending six feet out over the sidewalk, the 231-year-old Alexander Grant House is the home of Salem County Historical Society. Exhibits range from Indian relics to a replica of a colonial bedroom.

Head out of Salem on the street across from the post office to Oakwood Beach, El-

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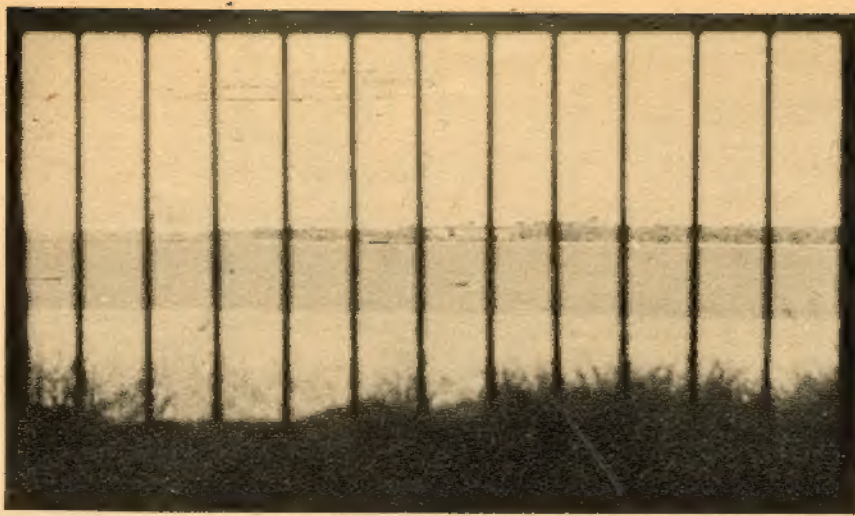
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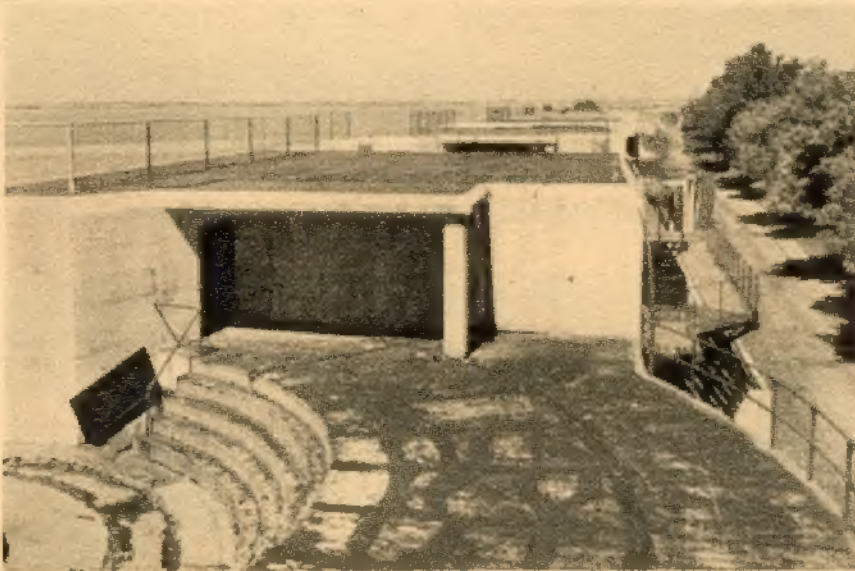
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Fort Delaware on Pea Patch Island viewed from Fort Mott window which overlooks the Delaware.



Concrete gun emplacements at Fort Mott, built early in Civil War to guard Philadelphia port.



Stone obelisk, a memorial to 2,436 Confederate dead, stands in Finn's Point National Cemetery.

(Cont'd from Preceding Page)
sinboro Point and eventually Hancock's Bridge. Several splendid views of the Delaware River are offered and Elsinboro Point affords a chance to visit the site of the first Swedish settlement in New Jersey. The Swedes called their settlement Fort Elfsborg when they built it in 1643, but quickly they nicknamed it Myggenborg or Mosquito Castle.

HISTORIC William Hancock House, built in 1734 by William Hancock for his bride Sarah, still stands in mute testimony to one of the most brutal massacres in the Revolution. In the house, on the night of March 21, 1778, a detachment of 300 British soldiers and Loyalist comrades trapped a sleeping band of 30 American militiamen. The attackers gave no quarter as they methodically bayoneted every man they found. Blood stains of the slaughtered men still darken the attic floors.

The house is intriguing also for its architecture, its interior finish and its furnishings. The glazed bricks of the outer end walls are set in the ornate pattern typical of so many South Jersey brick homes. On

LET'S EXPLORE—HISTORIC SOUTH JERSEY

the south wall are the initials of the Hancocks.

BEHIND the Hancock house stands an ancient cabin, said to be the first log cabin in America. Built nearly 300 years ago of cedar logs dug from the South Jersey swamps by Swedish settlers, it is unique because of the dovetail and tongue and groove construction, probably the only house of its type in the country.

The swamps surrounding Hancock's bridge have long been noted as muskrat-trapping country. Since the beginning of the 20th Century trappers have boomed muskrat pelts into a million-dollar industry in New Jersey, centering mainly in lower Salem County.

Back roads lead from the marshes through rich farmlands to Greenwich, site of one of New Jersey's most unique episodes—the Greenwich Tea Party. The anti-British sentiment, which flared through this region long before the Revolution, came to a head in Greenwich in Decem-

ber, 1774, when the tea-laden ship Greyhound put into port and stored its tea in a nearby building. On the night of December 22 a band of Greenwich patriots disguised as Indians entered the building, carted the tea into a nearby lot and burned it in defiance of the British.

A STONE monument on the main street of quiet Greenwich pays tribute to the tea party, but the entire tone of the well-preserved village on the banks of Cohansey Creek is as durable a monument. A delightful afternoon can be spent in Greenwich, walking its shady streets and looking at its old houses. Residents know the village story well and take great pride in retelling it. Greenwich is not "restored" Americana; Greenwich is living Americana.

Homeward the way is by way of Bridgeton, Cumberland's county seat which dates from 1686. A particular point of interest is Broad Street Presbyterian Church, on Bridgeton's main street, built in 1792 with funds obtained

by a lottery authorized by the Legislature. In the court house the Cumberland County Historical Society displays among other things the "Liberty Bell" cast in 1763 and rung in 1776 to celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

THROUGHOUT this visit to Salem and Cumberland counties the motorist is struck by prosperous farmlands. During the growing season canneries in Bridgeton and Salem buy tomatoes from surrounding farms and turn them into catsup and chili sauce and the spicy smells hang in the air for miles around.

Even more vital to the region's economy is Seabrook Farms, astride Route 46 on the way back to Mullica Hill and the Turnpike. The tremendous farm, with its quick-freezing plants, embraces well over 60,000 acres through ownership, leases or purchases of crops. Seabrook Farms is the modern tribute to the area's fertility, a factor which caused Gen. Mad Anthony Wayne to forage through the region during the Revolution to feed Washington's army at Valley Forge.



View down lane toward Cohansey Creek, Greenwich, where patriots staged 1774 "tea party."



Broad Street Presbyterian Church in Bridgeton, built in 1792 with funds obtained from lottery.